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Perception, Attitude and Experience of Lady Medical Representatives towards Sales Profession: A Quantitative Study

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Personal selling is a crucial determinant factor of success in pharmaceutical marketing. In pharmaceutical selling, the sales personnel are known as a medical representative or detail men.

Objective: The objective of the study was to analyse the perception, attitude and experience of lady medical representative towards the sales profession.

Methods: Total sample size used for the study was fifty from various pharmaceutical companies. Nonprobability convenience sampling method was used for the study.

Results: From the above survey it was noted that lady medical representatives were working as full time for the company. Majority of the respondents believe that there is no differential treatment given to them in comparison to male medical representatives.

Conclusion: According to respondents there are lots of advantages like a good job with good package and with flexible timings. Further concept of Lady Medical Representative is at a nascent stage in India and may become more popular in future according to the majority of the respondents.

Key Words: Lady Medical Representatives, Medical Representatives, Personal selling.

INTRODUCTION

Personal selling is an ancient art.¹ In pharmaceutical marketing, marketing is carried out by personal selling. Personal selling refers to face-to-face attempts to persuade prospective prescribers to consider acquiring products or services. Medical representative refers to a person who persuades the doctors or medical professional to prescribe their products to the patient and help to generate sales. Medical representatives are the bridge between physicians and companies.² Personal selling is a crucial determinant factor of success in pharmaceutical marketing. The major reason is pharmaceutical marketing is a highly specialized form of direct marketing which does not lend itself to mass advertising. It markets product and services to intermediary customers like physicians who advise and recommend the product to the end-users through their prescription. In pharmaceutical selling, the sales personnel are known as medical representative or detail men as they detail the product to the doctors. The pharmaceutical sales representatives play a critical role in the development

and sustainability of the business through the selling of products and services.³ As per the literature search, many studies are conducted on the perception of medical representatives. However, studies on lady medical representatives are rare in the Indian context. The present study focused on To perception, attitude and experience of lady medical representative (LMR) towards the sales profession.

Objectives of Sales Profession⁴

Prospecting: Searching for prospects or leads, Targeting: Deciding how to allocate their time among prospect and customers, Communicating: Communicating information about the company's products and services, Selling: Approaching, presenting, answering a question, overcoming objections and closing sales, Servicing: Providing various services to the customers, Information gathering: Conducting market research and doing intelligence work, Allocating: Deciding which customers will get scarce products during product shortages.

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Roles and Responsibility of Medical Representative⁵

Help to generate sales of the company, Organize conferences and meeting for doctors and healthcare professional, Help in market research, Identification of competitors, Help in branding, Build a relationship with professionals, Market review of new product and services, Generating new business idea, Bring feedback from the healthcare professional, Fulfill requirements of the healthcare profession and answering queries and handling complains, Review the sale and stock availability, Detailing the product to the doctors, answer the queries and give the sample to them, Regularly meeting the chemist and stockiest and building a good relationship with them, Monitoring activities, products, and services of competitors, Medical representative should know how to examine sales data, estimate market potential, collect market intelligence, and create a market scheme and plans. Medical representatives require analytical marketing acquirement and these acquirements will become important at the higher levels of sales management. It is important to understand both marketings as well as selling skills for more effectiveness of the sales force.

Advantages of Sales Profession⁶

Stimulates personal growth: Sales profession helps to stimulate personal growth. Here personal growth is directly proportional to the performances. But personal growth is much easier in comparison to the corporate world. Freedom of Expression: In the sales profession, there is freedom of expression. You can express in a much better way and free to do what you like. Every day you will face a different challenge. In India, many pharmaceutical companies recruit male candidates for this challenging job. From a literature search, it was noted that the study on lady medical representative's views, experience and perception towards the sales profession are limited.⁷

Research Methodology

Research design type used in this work was exploratory and not conclusive. The primary objective of exploratory research is to provide insights into and an understanding of the problem confronting the researcher. The target sample size used for the study was fifty. It was a direct approach where the purpose of the study was disclosed to the respondents. Primary data was obtained with the help of a structured questionnaire. Secondary data were obtained from published literature in medical, pharmacy and management online and print journals, newspaper, magazines, opinion articles and news items from the internet. Sample, a subgroup of the elements of the population was selected for participation in the study. The sampling technique used for the study was non-probability convenience sampling, which relies on the personal judgment of the researcher rather than the chance

to select sample elements. The lady medical representatives were interviewed at the hospitals, stockiest, and private clinics. The area of study was Karnataka, Maharashtra and Odisha. The total duration of the study was seven months. A questionnaire (a structured technique for data collection consisting of a series of questions, written or verbal, to which respondents reply) which consisted of a formalized set of questions was used for obtaining information from respondents; questions were carefully framed to minimize the element of bias and errors.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Below are some of the statements related to the working of a lady medical representative

Question	Yes (%)	No (%)
Differential treatment in compare to MR	08	92
Lady Doctor feels more comfortable if the MR visiting her is a lady.	72	28
Gynec. products are better handled by LMR	92	08
LMR is generally perceived to be more credible and trustworthy than male MR	90	10
LMR are usually not capable of coping up with a busy work schedule required by sales job.	30	70
Working away from the family and frequent travelling outside the headquarters may not be suitable for LMR.	58	42
LMR does not stick to her job for a long time.	42	58
Travelling frequently is a constraint for LMR.	48	52
LMR will become more popular in future	96	04

Table 1 indicate about work-related views among lady medical representatives. 92% of respondents said that there is no differential treatment to LMR compared to male medical representatives. 72% of the respondents reported that lady doctors feel more comfortable with the lady medical representative. 92% agreed that lady medical representatives can better handle the products which are positioned for the exclusive use of the female patient. 90% of the respondents agreed to the fact that lady medical representatives are more trustworthy and credible than male medical representative. 70% of the respondents disagreed to the statement that lady medical representatives were not able to cope up with the busy work schedule of the company. 52% of the respondents denied that travelling is a constraint for lady medical representative.

The rest of the respondents 48% told that occasionally feel difficulty in travelling especially in outside the headquarters.

58% agreed that they were not comfortable with working away from family and outside the headquarters. 42% of the respondents agreed that they may not stick to the job for a long time for personal problems. An overwhelming majority of the respondents 96% mentioned that the concept of the LMR will become more popular in future.

Table 2: Advantages and Disadvantages of your present job

Response (Advantages)	% of Respondents	Response (Disadvantages)	% of Respondents
Flexible timings	36%	Travelling	34%
Good salary	50%	Sales Pressure	26%
Socialize	6%	Not Responded	26%
Others	8%	Others	14%

Table 2 shows about advantages and disadvantages of the present job performed by lady medical representatives. 50% of the respondents told that the main advantage of this job was a good salary with incentives. About 36% of the respondents mentioned that there was flexible timing and they can fix the schedule by themselves. 34% of the respondents travelling is a major problem. While 26% of the respondents mentioned that one of the problems they face was sale pressure. About 26% of the respondents have not responded to the question.

Table 3: Reasons for not employing by pharmaceutical companies and general views about the present job

Response (Reasons for not employing by pharmaceutical companies)	% of Respondents	Response (General views about present job)	% of Respondents
Travelling	50	Good job and salary	74
Safety	10	Flexible timing	6
Less efficient	16	Socialization	10
Can't work for a long time	10	Low motivational job	2
Others	14	Less respect	2
		Others	6

Table 3 indicate about reasons for not employing lady medical representatives by pharmaceutical companies and general views about the present job. According to LMR may not be able to travel a lot like the male medical representative. Companies also have to think about their security and safety.

They also may not stick to the job for a long time as they relocate to other places due to marriage or some other reasons. 74% feel that the present job is good and have a good salary. While 6% of the respondents told that job has flexible timings and 10% of the respondent feel that this job help to socialize. While 2% of the respondents think that it is a low motivational job and have less respect.

CONCLUSION

From the above survey it was noted that from lady medical representatives' perspective, there is no differential treatment given to them compared to male medical representatives. They are trustworthy and credible than male medical representative. Lady doctors were more comfortable with Lady MR than male medical representative and are free to talk about the product for female patients. Travelling may sometimes be a constraint for the LMR. Lady medical representatives can cope up with the busy work schedule of the company. They do stick to the job for a very long time. There are lots of advantages of this job that is referred by the LMR such as a good job with good package. There are no time boundaries with flexible timings. Some of the disadvantages of this job are sale pressure and a lot of travelling. The reasons behind not employing LMR by pharmaceutical companies is that they cannot travel a lot, and the companies feel that they must take responsibilities of their safety and security. Some other reasons are like; they do not stick to the job for a long time for personal reasons. They may not able to cope up with the busy work schedule of the companies. Majority of the respondents told that the LMR concept will become more popular in future. They like the job because of good and attractive salary and flexible working time. From the above study, we can conclude that the concept of LMR is at a nascent stage in India. However, in recent times pharmaceutical companies are looking for LMR to achieve the sales objective.

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ANNEXURE

- ▶ In your company is there any differential treatment in comparison to male medical representative.
Yes: () No: ()
Compensation: () Working hours: () Working norms: () If any other.....
- ▶ Below are some of the statements related to the working of a lady medical representative:
Please tick Yes or No on the basis of your working experience:
() Products positioned for exclusive use of female patients can be better handled by lady medical representative.
() A lady doctor feels more comfortable if the medical representative visiting her is a lady.
() Lady medical representative are generally perceived to be more credible and trustworthy than male medical representative.
() Lady medical representative are usually not capable of coping up with the busy work schedule required by sales job.
() Travelling frequently is a constraint for a lady medical representative.
() Working away from the family and frequent travelling outside the headquarters may not be suitable to a lady medical representative.
() A lady medical representative does not stick to her job for a long time.
() If any other please specify.....
- ▶ In your opinion what advantages you enjoy, and constraints do you face in your present job.
Advantages..... Disadvantages.....
- ▶ In your opinion overall, what are reasons for many pharmaceutical companies not employing lady medical representative.
- ▶ In your opinion do you think that the concept of lady medical representative will become more popular in future?
Yes: () No: ()
- ▶ In general would you like to comment anything more about your job.